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ABSTRACT

The operations of the 50 Army National Guard (ARNG) schools were reviewed to determine if the ARNG could meet its officer needs more effectively and economically. The study examined the following: (1) the numbers of officers being produced by the various ARNG commissioning sources, particularly the state officer candidate schools (OCS); (2) the recent consolidation of portions of the state OCS programs; and (3) the potential for increasing economies through further consolidation. The study found that the ARNG officer requirements and the number of officers commissioned through the state OCS program has declined by one-third since 1988 and could decline further. The ARNG has begun consolidation of two of the three phases of officer training, but this will not reduce the number of schools in operation. Consolidation of ARNG commissioning training at a single site would offer additional opportunities to enhance the quality of the program and cut costs by closing the state programs. Although the Army considered consolidating all its OCS functions at Fort Benning, it rejected such an approach on the following grounds: Fort Benning does not have sufficient capacity to train the ARNG candidates, candidates would not be willing to attend a centralized program, and the quality of the consolidated program would not be superior to the state programs. Available evidence, however, suggests that a centralized OCS program for the ARNG would provide equal or higher quality officer training at a lower cost. (The Department of Defense's response to the study, which generally rebuts the study conclusions, is included.) (KC)

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United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Secretary of Defense

March 1994

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Officer Candidate Training Should Be Consolidated at One Site

ED 369 962

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GAO/NSIAD-94-1

GAO

United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

B-255109

March 22, 1994

The Honorable William J. Perry
Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Department of Defense (DOD) funds the operation of over 50 schools to produce officers for the Army National Guard (ARNG). We reviewed the operations of these schools to determine if the ARNG could meet its officer needs more effectively and economically. We examined the (1) numbers of officers being produced by the various ARNG commissioning sources, particularly the state officer candidate schools (OCS); (2) recent consolidation of portions of the state OCS programs; and (3) potential for increasing economies through further consolidation.

Background

The ARNG exists in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and the trust territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The National Guard has both a state and a federal mission. In peacetime, the National Guard performs a variety of state support roles such as riot control, disaster relief, and drug interdiction, in addition to training for their wartime mission. In wartime, the National Guard can be mobilized and called to active duty for extended periods of time.

The ARNG operates OCS programs in conjunction with state military academies in 52 states and territories. Currently, all but Guam and the Virgin Islands offer the OCS course as a part of their state military academy curriculum. The cost of operating the OCS programs is supported primarily with federal dollars.

The state OCS program lasts approximately 1 year and is taught in three phases. Phase 1, conducted in a 2-week annual summer training period, focuses on individual- and squad-level skills. Phase 2 continues a mix of individual- and squad-level training at a frequency of 1 weekend per month. Phase 3 is conducted during the next summer's 2-week annual training period, and emphasizes platoon-level training. At the end of the phase 3 training, individuals are eligible to be commissioned in the ARNG.

Other sources of newly commissioned ARNG officers include the federal OCS at Fort Benning, Georgia; the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC); and direct appointments (which are primarily professional personnel such

as doctors, lawyers, and chaplains). Fort Benning is the only active Army site offering OCS training, and offers two OCS courses—the regular active duty 14-week course and a reserve component course, which is 10 weeks in duration.[1]

From 1981 through 1992, an average of 44.4 percent of initial accessions were from the state OCSs, 41.7 percent were ROTC graduates, 4.4 percent received officer training at Fort Benning, and 9.5 percent received direct appointments. In addition to these commissioning programs, the ARNG also gets officers from those leaving active duty.

Results in Brief

ARNG officer requirements and the number of officers commissioned through the state OCS program have declined by one-third since 1988 and could decline further. The ARNG has begun consolidation of phases 1 and 3 of the states' officer training. However, this will not reduce the number of schools in operation. Consolidation of ARNG commissioning training at a single site would offer additional opportunities to enhance the quality of the program and cut costs by closing the state programs.

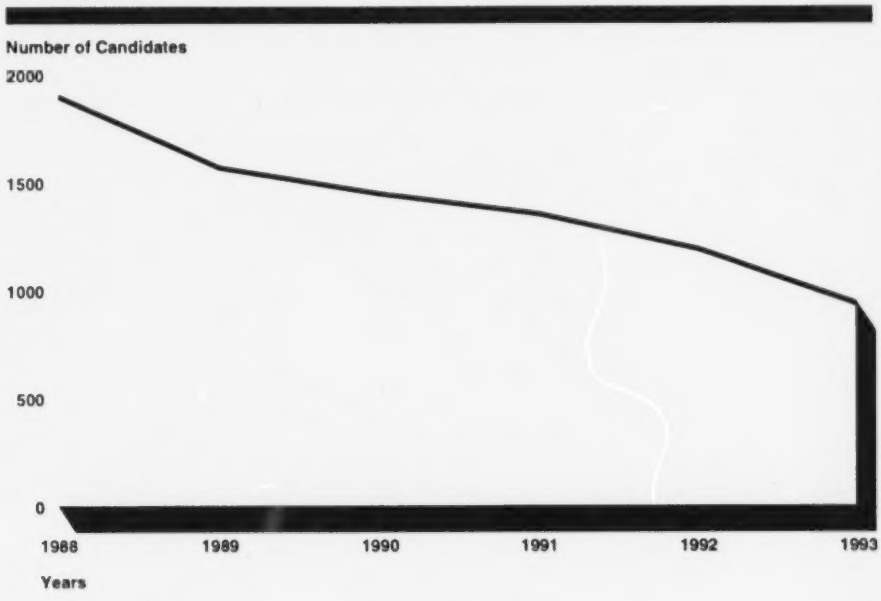
In response to congressional direction, the Army considered, but rejected, the feasibility of requiring all officer candidates to attend the OCS program at Fort Benning. Its conclusion was based on the following assumptions: (1) Fort Benning does not have sufficient capacity to train the ARNG candidates, (2) candidates would not be willing to attend a centralized program, and (3) the quality of the consolidated program would not be superior to the state programs. We believe the Army did not have sufficient basis to reject the feasibility of the consolidation approach because the first two assumptions were not sound and the third assumption is untestable because the Army does not capture data on the quality of the various OCS programs. However, available evidence suggests that a centralized OCS program for the ARNG would provide equal or higher quality commissioning training at a lower cost.

[1]We were told those attending the 10-week class spend more hours per week in training activities, some of the physical training aspects are shortened, and some optional training activities are omitted. All Army commissioning programs, active and reserve, are required to meet the standards established in the Military Qualifications Standards-1 manual, regardless of the length of the training.

Number of Officers Produced by ARNG OCS Program Has Declined

The number of ARNG graduates of the state OCS program declined from almost 1,900 to less than 1,200 between 1988 and 1993, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: State OCS Graduates, 1988-93



With the overall decline in OCS graduates, the size of the graduating classes in individual state schools has likewise declined. Table 1 shows how the class sizes of the state academies have decreased over the past 5 years. In 1988, California and New York graduated 143 and 128 ARNG officers, respectively. By 1992, the highest number to graduate from any one school was California, with 70 graduates; Nevada graduated 3, while Alaska and the District of Columbia did not operate a class that year.

Table 1: Size of State OCS Classes Based on the Number of ARNG Graduates 1988-92

	Class Size Ranges						
Year	1-10	11-25	26-50	51-75	76-100	101+	Total
1988	8	15	15	11	1	2	**52**
1989	9	24	10	7	1	2	**53**
1990	7	22	19	2	2	0	**52**
1991	7	24	16	3	2	0	**52**
1992	10	22	15	3	0	0	**50**

Despite the steady decline in the number of candidates, the number of classes during 1988 to 1992 has remained fairly constant. Overall, the typical state OCS program is fairly small. In fact, 64 percent of the state OCS classes graduated fewer than 26 candidates in 1992.

The ARNG's need for new officers from its OCSs has been decreasing, due to (1) cuts in military forces; (2) new officers commissioned via the ROTC; and (3) the Army National Guard Combat Readiness Reform Act of 1992, which established an objective of increasing the percentage of qualified prior active-duty officers in the ARNG to 65 percent by September 30, 1997.

Anticipating an annual need for 1,500 to 2,100 lieutenants through 1996, the ARNG plans for state academies and the federal OCS together to provide one-third of that number, with ROTC and active-duty sources each providing another third. Of the OCS third, federal OCS will train 35 percent (175 to 245) and the state academies will train the remaining 65 percent (325 to 455 students). This will represent a significant reduction from the nearly 1,200 candidates who graduated from state academies in 1992.

ARNG Is Consolidating Parts of State OCS Program

To maintain training quality as the number of students decline, ARNG academy officials have begun some consolidation of the annual training periods (phases 1 and 3). In 1993, 43 states consolidated at least one of their annual training periods. Phase 1 training was conducted at 31 locations and phase 3 at 20 locations during 1993. By 1995, the ARNG plans to conduct phase 1 training at only five locations and phase 3 training at only two locations. Phase 2, however, would continue to be taught over a year during weekend drills at the individual state OCS academies. According to ARNG officials, consolidation of phase 1 and phase 3 provides the following advantages:

- A sufficient number of candidates is needed to provide realistic platoon-level training. We were told that 40 to 50 students are needed to

provide 4 full squads for this training, although some officials believe that 24 students organized into 3 skeletally-staffed squads is sufficient. Even using this lesser number as a criterion, in 1992 only 20 of the states had enough students to provide realistic training.

- All active and reserve component Army officer candidates would receive the same training.

Several states are also considering consolidation of phase 2 (weekend) training, which is considered highly desirable for those adjacent states having too few students to conduct realistic and economical training. In 1993, for example, Alaska and Wyoming offered a consolidated, shortened training period of 6 weeks—2 weeks of phase 1 were taught in a consolidated session in Nebraska, then a 2-week phase 2 was held in Alaska, followed by a 2-week phase 3 in Washington. Six-week training periods are not new to Alaska's ARNG academy; for years, the OCS there offered its program in one 6-week period. According to Alaska ARNG officials, a 6-week training program fits the seasonal nature of Alaskan life styles, has been accredited, and meets all the standards required of such schools.

A Single Training Site Could Enhance Quality and Lower Costs

The ARNG's consolidation efforts offer some advantages over the current training. However, consolidating all phases of ARNG training into a 10-week course at a single site could result in even higher-quality training and more cost savings.

One-site training would ensure that all ARNG officer candidates receive the same level and quality of training. A full-time faculty and staff would provide continuity of training and counseling. The quality of instructors could be more easily assessed at a single location. Additionally, one-site training would allow greater realism in training. Consecutive or uninterrupted training could also minimize refresher training currently needed in the one drill weekend per month training. In fact, the Air National Guard trains its officer candidates this way. All of its candidates are trained at one site—the Air National Guard Academy of Military Science—in a 6-week officer training program.

Consolidated training could also reduce the attrition rate for the officer candidate schools. We found that centralized courses, such as the National Guard OCS program offered by the Air Force and the federal OCS program at Fort Benning, have experienced lower attrition rates than the state academies. ARNG now averages a 38-percent attrition rate; in comparison,

ARNG officer candidates attending the federal OCS have averaged a 27-percent attrition rate. The Air National Guard Academy has experienced only a 2-percent attrition rate over the last 3 years.

Training all ARNG officers at a single site offers the opportunity for significant savings with regard to personnel. However, because neither National Guard headquarters nor the individual states track personnel costs associated with the OCS programs, it is difficult to estimate the amount of such savings with precision. At the four states we visited (Alaska, Arkansas, Maine, and Virginia), we constructed estimates of annual personnel costs ranging from $54,000 to $155,000, averaging approximately $102,000. Assuming each of the 52 OCS programs incurred the average personnel cost, the total personnel costs for operating OCS would be approximately $5.3 million. We believe this is a conservative estimate, as we did not visit any of the larger schools. The limitations on the cost data are discussed in greater detail in our scope and methodology section.

Officials at the federal OCS program at Fort Benning told us that they currently produce approximately 400 graduates with a full-time staff of 38. If the number of OCS candidates were increased to Fort Benning's full capacity of 1,200—enough to train both active and ARNG candidates—program officials said they would need 24 more fulltime personnel. These personnel would cost about $1.4 million a year. If all state OCS candidates were trained at Fort Benning the cost savings could be about $3.9 million a year, depending on how many positions were eliminated at the state academies. Eliminating the state OCS programs would not entail closing any installations or facilities, since the OCS schools are a relatively small part of the state ARNG military training programs.

Neither National Guard headquarters nor the individual states track travel expenses associated specifically with the ARNG OCS programs. While sending all officer candidates to a single site would likely require more travel expenses than the state programs have been incurring, centralized training could still save money if the travel cost experiences at the state academies we visited are indicative of total savings.

While training all officer candidates at a single site would require all academies to transport their candidates to that location, candidates would only have to be transported one time to complete the OCS course. In fact, many states have already begun transporting their candidates to

out-of-state training and anticipate doing it more under the planned interstate consolidations of phases 1 and 3 in the future. For example, as a result of the summer training consolidations, 22 academies incurred transportation expenses to send their officer candidates to one phase of training conducted in another state. Another 14 academies incurred transportation expenses to send candidates out of state for 2 phases. Plans for further summer training consolidation will result in most of the state academies having to transport their candidates twice to training conducted outside of their resident state.

In addition, requiring all candidates to attend a single site will eliminate the in-state transportation expenses incurred during the phase 2 (weekend drill) training. Currently, several states are incurring travel expenses to get their officer candidates to the weekend drill periods of phase 2 training. Candidates attached to local ARNG units receive travel and per diem allowances for weekend drills. The states differ in deciding whether candidates should be attached to the academy or left with their home units, so some states pay travel expenses while others do not. In one of the four states we visited, phase 2 travel costs involved in commissioning an officer were as high as $26,000. The phase 2 travel expenses would not be required for any officer candidates attending the 10-week consolidated training at a single site.

Army Rejected Fort Benning for One-Site Consolidation but Decision Based on Erroneous Assumptions

Consolidating the ARNG OCS programs is not a new idea. Section 527 of the fiscal years 1992 and 1993 Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 102-190) required the Army to evaluate the desirability of requiring all ARNG personnel seeking a commission through OCS to,attend the OCS at Fort Benning. This requirement was prompted by a concern over variance in quality of the state-administered OCS courses.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) reported in March 1993 that "... the Army believes the current system strikes a reasonable balance between quality, available resources, field requirements, and the needs of RC [Reserve Component] soldiers." The Army based its conclusions on three assumptions: (1) ARNG-OCS needs would exceed the capacity of Fort Benning and therefore require significant investment in additional facilities, (2) sufficient qualified candidates would not be willing to attend OCS at Fort Benning, and (3) there was no evidence that Fort Benning's program produced a better officer. We believe that the first two assumptions are unsound. While the third assumption is untestable due to the lack of data comparing

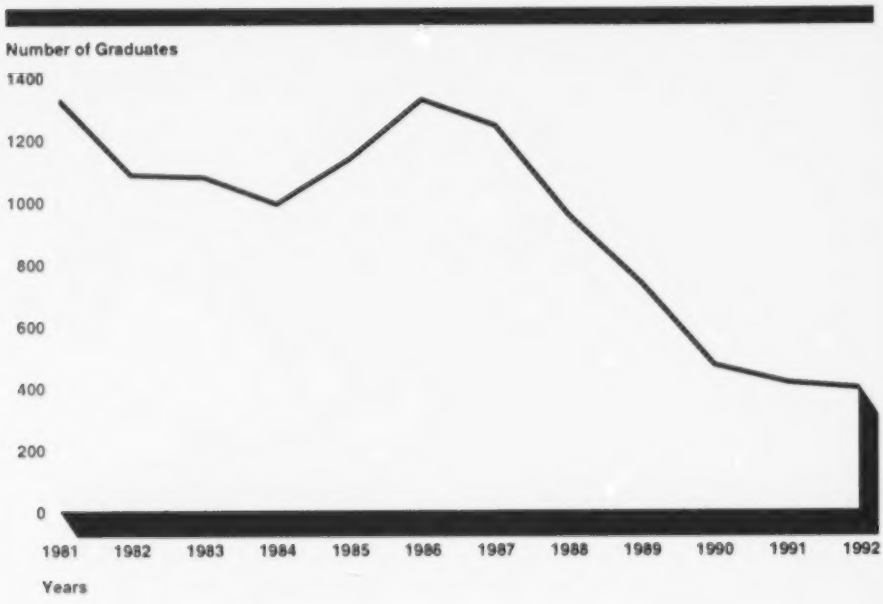
alternative commissioning programs, available evidence suggests that a consolidated program would be of equal or greater quality to the individual programs.

Fort Benning Has the Capacity to Train Guard Officers

The Army report stated that eliminating the state OCS program and expanding either the federal OCS or the OCS-Reserve Component course would require a significant expenditure of resources. Officials who conducted the Army study told us their conclusion was based on the assumption that Fort Benning currently had the capacity to produce only 350 officers annually and that Fort Benning would be required to construct additional facilities to train all the OCS candidates. Our review, however, indicates that this is not the case.

Currently, Fort Benning offers 4 regular classes and 1 reserve component class annually, producing about 400 new lieutenants. As shown in figure 2, Fort Benning previously produced between 1,000 and 1,400 graduates per year during most of the 1980s. However, as of February 1993, the Army plans to produce a maximum of only 450 OCS officers annually through 1998. The projected OCS production consists of 300 for the active component, 100 for the National Guard, and 50 for the Army Reserves.

Figure 2: Number of Fort Benning OCS Graduates, 1981-92



Officials at Fort Benning said current facilities can produce 1,200 officers annually without overlapping classes or the need to construct new facilities. With a capacity of 1,200 and the ARNG need for 500 to 700 OCS officers annually, it appears that the current facilities at Fort Benning would accommodate the needs of both the active Army and the ARNG.

Army Survey and Air National Guard Experience Indicate Candidates Would Attend a Centralized OCS

ARNG officials stated that a number of their candidates would not attend a 6- to 10-week centralized OCS program because of job or family commitments. The Army report stated that ". . . [I]t is not clear that there would be enough qualified officers for the National Guard if attendance at Federal OCS were required."

However, the evidence indicates that this concern is overstated. Available data indicated that centralizing ARNG commissioning training would not have a great impact on recruitment of officer candidates. An Army survey of state officer candidates,[2] administered in April 1992, indicated that over 60 percent of the candidates would have attended the 10- or 14-week

[2]Survey prepared by Army Personnel Survey Office, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavior and Social Sciences.

federal OCS if required, while only 17 percent said they would not become officers if Fort Benning were the only option. Eighteen percent were undecided, and 5 percent said they would choose ROTC as a commissioning source.

Additionally, Air National Guard officials stated that they have had no difficulty in obtaining candidates for their 6-week centralized officer training program. While the past experience of Air National Guard officials and the opinions of current officer candidates may not be directly applicable to future ARNG officer candidates, we believe that, with the significant reduction in officer requirements, the ARNG will not have difficulty attracting officer candidates if the training is conducted at Fort Benning.

No Evidence on the Quality of Officers Produced by Different Officer Accession Programs

The Army report stated that "[T]here is no convincing evidence that the Federal OCS program produces an officer superior in quality to the other programs."

However, Army officials responsible for the report told us they were not able to measure quality of officers produced at either the state academies or Fort Benning.

The Army has a core curriculum that all commissioning programs, including the Military Academy, ROTC, and the OCSs, must follow to ensure that all new officers meet the Army's minimum qualifications. While each ARNG academy maintains a standard program of instruction and tests, neither the Army nor the states have assessed the performance of academy graduates as officers. In an earlier review we found a similar situation for all newly commissioned officers, and we recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the services to develop a means to routinely evaluate the effectiveness of the various commissioning programs and the quality of the graduates that they produce.[3] This project is to be implemented for the active services by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Each ARNG academy operates independently, with policy and funding provided by the National Guard Bureau. Each undergoes annual accreditation reviews by the U.S. Army Forces Command, but these are merely checklist assessments of candidate selection, instruction, facilities,

[3]Officer Commissioning Programs: More Oversight and Coordination Needed (GAO/NSIAD-93-37, Nov. 6, 1992).

and availability of applicable regulations. The states we visited also use several internal quality assurance checks, but these are not standardized and rely primarily on the discretion of the state. The Army is planning to accredit each academy under a new program in the future, but details on this program were unavailable at the time of our review.

Recommendation

To make the ARNG officer production system more cost-effective, especially in light of ongoing force reductions, we recommend that you direct the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to transition toward using the officer candidate school at Fort Benning, Georgia, to train new ARNG officers rather than using the individual state academies. A staged transition, such as closing the smaller academies first, could be used to capture reliable personnel and travel cost data to provide a more conclusive assessment of cost-effectiveness. Since closing state OCS academies would not involve closing down installations or facilities, there is little potential risk in moving quickly.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD did not agree with our recommendation. It argued that (1) the state ARNG OCS programs will have to produce more of the officers by 1997, (2) our estimates of cost savings at a single, consolidated site appear to be inflated, and (3) centralized training would have a negative impact on the ability to recruit officer candidates. DOD comments are reprinted in appendix I.

DOD built its argument on the need for more state OCS-trained ARNG officers by 1997 by assuming that ROTC and active duty transfers combined would provide only 700 to 800 of the total need, in contrast to the 500 to 700 officers from each of those sources that we cite. We based our numbers on the latest available projections prepared by the ARNG Readiness Center. The Readiness Center has projected the need for state OCS-trained officer accessions to decrease from 925 in fiscal year 1993, to 828 in 1994, to 750 in 1995, and to 700 in 1996 and 1997, based on a total need of about 2,100 to 2,300 ARNG officer accessions per year. These ARNG-prepared projections of the number of graduates needed from the state OCS programs are well below the 1,150 to 1,450 per year cited by DOD and they are within the capacity of the Fort Benning OCS program to produce.

DOD's assumption also ignores the Readiness Reform Act's goal of increasing the percentage of National Guard officers who have prior active duty service, which should prompt more vigorous ARNG recruitment efforts

among those officers leaving the active military. In addition, over the 12-year period from fiscal year 1981 through 1992, ROTC programs provided over 14,000 ARNG officers, or an average of nearly 1,200 per year—well in excess of the 500 to 700 projected to be needed annually from that source in the future. DOD's statement that only 700 to 800 new officers could be expected from ROTC and active duty transfers combined is at odds with this experience.

DOD's concern about our cost estimates centered on the need to pay per diem expenses to candidates if they attended a consolidated training site. According to military travel regulations, this would amount to just $2 per day (or $140 for a 10-week program). If 1,000 candidates attended the training each year, per diem costs would be only $140,000 annually—and projected savings could still be over $3.7 million per year. DOD also stated that candidates attending phase 2 training do not receive any travel pay or per diem. However, we found that some states do in fact pay travel and per diem during phase 2 training.

DOD also stated that a consolidated training site would result in up to 40 percent of potential officer candidates foregoing joining the ARNG because of conflicts with employment and education programs. The source cited for that figure was the same survey conducted by the Army Research Institute that we referred to in our report. DOD arrived at its 40 percent estimate by adding the 17 percent who said they would not become officers (if the Fort Benning program were the only option), the 5 percent who said they would choose ROTC instead of Fort Benning, and the 18 percent who, although having the option to say they would not become ARNG officers, only indicated they were undecided. We can see no rationale for necessarily assuming that the additional 23 percent that DOD included would not join the ARNG.

In addition, DOD stressed that a change to a single-site program would be particularly risky because the ARNG was already experiencing a shortage of approximately 3,250 captains. This is an incomplete depiction of the situation and overstates the risk. During the same period in which the DOD cites the shortage of captains, the ARNG also had about 3,450 more lieutenants than authorized and, overall, the ARNG had an excess of officers in the company grade ranks (second lieutenant through captain).

We continue to believe that available data suggests that consideration of officer candidate training at Fort Benning would meet the ARNG's needs at lower cost than individual state schools. We also maintain that a staged

transition toward a single site consolidation would provide more conclusive data while minimizing risk.

Scope and Methodology

We reviewed guidance and regulations on the ARNG's commissioning sources, interviewed ARNG and Air National Guard officials, and obtained data at the ARNG headquarters and OCS programs in Alaska, Arkansas, Maine, and Virginia. These states were judgmentally selected on the basis of program size and geographical distribution. We had originally selected six state academies, two each from programs identified by ARNG authorities as small, medium, and large in size. However, after visiting four of these states, we determined that none collected adequate cost information and that continuing further with this methodology was not likely to be productive. We therefore focused the remainder of our fieldwork on reviewing the results of the consolidated OCS programs.

We had also intended to gather cost and program quality data from all the other state and territory programs through a pro-forma data collection instrument, but the absence of such information would have made this option unworkable. The cost estimates we were able to construct for the four academies we visited were based on state ARNG estimates of which personnel were involved in the OCS program and how much of their time the OCS program consumed.

We visited the consolidated phase 3 training at Fort Lewis, Washington, and interviewed representatives from the nine participating states. In addition, we interviewed Army officials from headquarters, the Training and Doctrine Command, and Fort Benning. We also interviewed Air Force and Air National Guard officials at headquarters, the Air National Guard Academy, and the four states we visited.

We performed our review between July 1992 and December 1993 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

We are sending copies of this report to the chairmen and ranking minority members of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations (Defense Subcommittee) and Armed Services, the Secretary of the Army, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

As you know, 31 U.S.C. 720 requires the head of a federal agency to submit a written statement on actions taken on our recommendations to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Government Operations no later than 60 days after the date of the report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report.

Please contact me at (202) 512-5140 if you have any questions concerning this report. Major contributors are listed in appendix II.

Sincerely yours,

Mark E. Gebicke
Director
Military Operations and Capabilities Issues

Comments From the Department of Defense

RESERVE AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1500

DEC 13 1993

Mr. Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General
National Security and International Affairs Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report, "ARMY NATIONAL GUARD: Officer Candidate Training Should Be Consolidated At One Site," dated October 28, 1993, (GAO Code 391183), OSD Case 9557. The DoD partially concurs with this report.

The DoD agrees that some consolidation of Reserve component training is possible to increase overall efficiency -- and consolidations are underway. The consolidations that have already taken place and are planned will limit active duty training to a few regional locations, and will substantially reduce program costs. Consolidation of all Army Officer Candidate School training at Fort Benning, Georgia, would not reduce costs significantly below the planned consolidation program.

The Department shares the concern of the Congress for having the highest quality officer corps in the Guard. The best way to accomplish that objective, however, is to retain the current mix of commissioning sources. The Army National Guard State Officer Candidate Program is a major source of officers for units in small communities and affords qualified soldiers the opportunity to earn a commission who, for employment or other valid reasons, cannot attend the Federal Officer Candidate School.

The quality of officers commissioned through State Officer Candidate School Programs is as high as in the Federal Programs. That is not surprising since the program of instruction is the same for all schools (Federal and State) and Commanders of Continental U.S. Armies provide close oversight to all the State Programs.

Further, it needs to be recognized that current officer production systems are not meeting the Army National Guard annual requirement for new lieutenants. Surveys indicate that up to 40 percent of State Officer Candidate School candidates might not have entered officer training if the Federal Officer Candidate School were the only commissioning option. The Army National Guard cannot risk exacerbating the current shortage of company grade officers, which would degrade readiness in its units.

Therefore, the DoD does not agree that the Army National Guard should transition to a single Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning and eliminate state academies. With little cost benefit, no substantial enhancement of the quality of officers being commissioned, and the risk of reduced enrollment, consolidation of Army Officer Candidate School training at one site is not justified.

Detailed DoD comments on the report findings and recommendation are provided in the enclosure. The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

Sincerely,

Deborah R. Lee

Deborah R. Lee

Enclosure:
As stated

**GAO DRAFT REPORT - DATED OCTOBER 28, 1993
(GAO CODE 391183) OSD CASE 9557**

"ARMY NATIONAL GUARD: OFFICER CANDIDATE TRAINING SHOULD BE CONSOLIDATED AT ONE SITE"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS

* * * * *

FINDINGS

- **FINDING A**: **The Army National Guard Officer Candidate School Programs**. The GAO reported that the Army National Guard operates Officer Candidate School programs in conjunction with their academies of military science in 52 states and territories. The GAO further reported that, currently, all but Guam and the Virgin Islands offer the Officer Candidate School course as a part of their academies of military science curriculum. The GAO noted that the cost of operating the Officer Candidate School programs is supported primarily with Federal dollars.

  The GAO pointed out that the state Officer Candidate School program lasts approximately one year and is taught in three phases. The GAO noted that, at the end of the phase 3 training, individuals are eligible to be commissioned in the Army National Guard. The GAO reported that other sources of newly-commissioned Army Guard officers include the Federal Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia; the Reserve Officers Training Corps; and direct appointments (which are primarily professional personnel, such as doctors). The GAO found that, during the period from 1981 through 1992, an average of 44.4 percent of initial accessions were from the state Officer Candidate Schools; 41.7 percent were Reserve Officer Training Corps graduates; 4.4 percent received officer training at Fort Benning; and 9.5 percent received direct appointments. The GAO pointed out that, in addition to the cited commissioning programs, the Guard also gets officers from those leaving active duty. (pp. 1-2/GAO Draft Report)

  Now on pp. 1-2.

  DOD RESPONSE: Concur.

- **FINDING B**: **The Number of Officers Produced by Guard Officer Candidate School Program Has Declined and Is Predicted to Decline Further**. The GAO found that, between 1988 and 1992, the number of graduates of the State Officer Candidate School program had declined from almost 1,900 to less than 1,200 . The

ENCLOSURE

GAO also found that, with the overall decline in Officer Candidate School graduates, the size of the graduating classes in individual state schools had likewise declined.

The GAO concluded that the Army National Guard need for new officers from its Officer Candidate Schools had been decreasing due to (1) cuts in military forces, (2) new officers commissioned via the Reserve Officer Training Corps, and (3) the Readiness Reform Act of 1992, which established an objective of increasing the percentage of qualified prior active-duty officers in the Army National Guard to 65 percent by September 30, 1997. The GAO noted that, in anticipation of an annual need for 1,500 to 2,100 lieutenants for the Army National Guard through 1997, the Army Guard plans for state academies and the Federal Officer Candidate School together to provide one-third of that number, with Reserve Officer Training Corps and active-duty sources each providing another one-third. The GAO reported that of the Officer Candidate School one-third, the Federal Officer Candidate School will train 35 percent (175 to 245), and the state academies will train the remaining 65 percent (325 to 455 students). The GAO further concluded that will represent a significant reduction from the nearly 1,200 candidates who graduated from state academies in 1992. (pp. 2-3/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 2-4.

DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. While the DoD agrees that officer production from State Officer Candidate School Programs declined between 1988 and 1992, the DoD does not agree that further reductions in program output are anticipated. Revised projections of the annual need for new lieutenants in the Army National Guard actually show an increase in the number required. A minimum of 2,100 lieutenants, and as many as 2,300, will be needed each year through 1997 to fill all requirements. That increase is required, in part, to rectify a current shortfall of approximately 3,250 officers at the captain level in the Army National Guard. The GAO statements that the Reserve Officer Training Corps Program and the active Army will each provide one third of Army National Guard lieutenant gains each year reflect goals, not forecasts. On the basis of recent experience, the active Army and Reserve Officer Training Corps programs combined will provide only 700-800 lieutenants to the Army National Guard, with Federal Officer Candidate School providing another 150. That leaves a remainder of 1,150 to 1,450 new lieutenants to be commissioned through State Officer Candidate School Programs. The number of officers projected to enter the Army National Guard from the Active Army could increase in the future but only modestly. Title XI of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1993 requires the Secretary of the Army to provide a program under which Reserve Officer Training Corps graduates may perform their period of obligated service by performing 2 years of active duty, followed by Reserve service. The Army anticipates that about 150 officers per year will elect that option. The decline in Army National Guard enrollment in Officer Candidate School Programs, both Federal and State, has been caused primarily by more stringent eligibility requirements in terms of civilian education. Decreased requirements for lieutenants and diminished interest in

officer training programs are less significant factors in the decline in enrollment in Officer Candidate School Programs than the imposition of higher eligibility standards.

- **FINDING C**: **Army National Guard is Consolidating Parts of State Officer Candidate School Program**. The GAO reported that, to maintain training quality as the numbers of students decline, Army National Guard academy officials had begun some consolidation of the annual training periods (Phases 1 and 3). The GAO noted that, in 1993, 43 states consolidated at least one of their annual training periods. The GAO found that, during 1993, Phase 1 training was conducted at 31 locations and Phase 3 at 20 locations. The GAO contended that by 1995, the Army National Guard plans to conduct Phase 1 training at only five locations and Phase 3 training at only two locations. The GAO noted, however, that Phase 2 would continue to be taught over a year during weekend drills at the individual state Officer Candidate School academies. The GAO reported that, according to Guard officials, consolidation of Phase 1 and Phase 3 provides some advantages:

  - a sufficient number of candidates is needed to provide realistic platoon-level training; and

  - all Guard and active Army officer candidates would receive the same training.

  The GAO found that several states are also considering consolidation of Phase 2 (weekend) training, which is considered highly desirable for those adjacent states having too few students to conduct realistic and economical training. (pp. 3-4/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp.4-5.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Army Training and Doctrine Command and the National Guard Bureau are developing proposals to establish a more cohesive and efficient active and Reserve component school system that promotes regional effectiveness and standardization. Consolidation of Phase II of the State Officer Candidate School in regional locations is under review and may be implemented in those areas of the country where travel expenses to the regional site are not prohibitive.

- **FINDING D**: **A Single Training Site Could Enhance Quality and Lower Costs**. The GAO reported that, while the National Guard's consolidation efforts offer advantages over the current training, consolidating all phases of Army National Guard training into a consecutive period at a single site, perhaps abbreviated to less than 10 weeks, could result in even higher quality training and more cost savings. The GAO pointed out that:

- one-site training would ensure that all Army National Guard officer candidates receive the same level and quality of training and a full-time faculty and staff would provide continuity of training and counseling;

- consolidated training could also reduce the attrition rate for officer candidate school;

- training all Army National Guard officers at a single site offers the opportunity for significant savings with regard to personnel;

- the Federal Officer Candidate School program at Fort Benning currently produces approximately 400 graduates with a full-time staff of 38--if the number of candidates (active and Army National Guard) were increased to their full capacity of 1,200, an increase of 24 more full-time personnel at a cost of about $1.4 million a year would be needed--but a savings of $3.9 million a year could be realized if candidates were trained at Fort Benning;

- while sending all officer candidates to a single site would likely require more travel expenses--centralized training could still save money if the travel cost experiences at the state academies are indications of total savings; and

- requiring all candidates to attend a single site will eliminate the in-state transportation expenses incurred during the Phase 2 (weekend drill) training.
(pp. 4-6/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp 5-7.

DOD RESPONSE: Nonconcur. All Army commissioning sources--Officer Candidate School, the Reserve Officer Training Corps, and the U.S. Military Academy--use as their guidelines for military training the list of tasks contained in STP 21-1-MQS (Military Qualification Standards). That is the means the Army uses to ensure all programs meet specified standards of quality. In addition, each state military academy is inspected annually by evaluators from the Army Forces Command to make certain that training standards are being met. Evidence to suggest that the Federal Officer Candidate School program produces an officer superior in quality to the other programs does not exist. In fact, all Officer Candidate School courses meet the prerequisites established in STP 21-1-MQS. The GAO cost savings estimates appear to be inflated, since only candidate basic pay and allowances and travel expenses are considered. Any consecutive training period of less than 20 weeks, which includes both types of Federal Officer Candidate School courses, requires the payment of per diem to the soldier students. Currently, candidates in State Officer Candidate School programs receive only base pay, allowances, and travel, without per diem, for Phases 1 and 3 and no travel pay or per diem for Phase 2 training. The per diem costs of consolidating all Officer Candidate School training at a single site, added to the costs of expanding the Federal program at Fort Benning, would offset any

savings to be gained by closing State Army National Guard Officer Candidate School Programs.

- **FINDING E**: **Army Rejected Fort Benning For One-Site Consolidation, But Decision Based on Erroneous Assumptions**. The GAO concluded that consolidating the Guard state Officer Candidate School programs is not a new idea because Section 527 of the Fiscal Year 1992 Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 102-90) required the Army to evaluate the desirability of requiring all Army National Guard personnel seeking a commission through Officer Candidate School to attend the Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning. The GAO noted that statutory requirement was prompted by a concern over variance in quality of the state-administered Officer Candidate School courses.

  The GAO explained that, in March 1993, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) reported that "... the Army believes the current system strikes a reasonable balance between quality, available resources, field requirements, and the needs of Reserve Component soldiers." The GAO concluded that the Army based its conclusions on three assumptions that are not reasonable--(1) Guard Officer Candidate School needs would exceed the capacity of Fort Benning and therefore require significant investment in additional facilities, (2) sufficient qualified candidates would not be willing to attend Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, and (3) there was no evidence that the Fort Benning program produced a better officer. (pp. 6-7/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 7-11.

DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. Although subsequent investigation has proven that the Army estimate of the capacity of Fort Benning to house and train a substantially higher number of officer candidates was understated, the other factors considered in its decision not to consolidate remain valid. The U.S. Army Research Institute survey of State Officer Candidate School candidates revealed that up to 40 percent of the soldiers surveyed would not have been willing to attend the Federal Officer Candidate School Program at Fort Benning. Current officer production systems for the Total Army do not meet the Army National Guard need for new lieutenants each year. To lose as many as 40 percent of potential State Officer Candidate School graduates would only exacerbate the shortfall and decrement readiness in Army National Guard units. In terms of quality of officers commissioned, there is no evidence to suggest that any Army officer-producing institution is superior or inferior to any other. Each targets specific sectors of society, and all are needed to meet the officer requirements of the Army.

- **FINDING F**: **Fort Benning Has the Capacity to Train Guard Officers**. The GAO noted the Army March 1993 report stated that eliminating the state Officer Candidate School program and expanding either the Federal Officer Candidate School or the Officer Candidate School-Reserve Component course would require a significant expenditure of resources. The GAO noted that, according to the officials who conducted the Army study, their conclusion was based on the assumption that Fort Benning currently had the capacity to produce only 350 officers annually and that Fort Benning would be required to construct additional facilities to train all the Officer Candidate School candidates. The GAO pointed out that its review, however, indicates that is not the case.

  The GAO asserted that officials at Fort Benning indicated that current facilities can actually produce 1,200 officers annually, without overlapping classes or the need to construct new facilities. The GAO concluded that, with a capacity of 1,200 and the National Guard need for 500 to 700 Officer Candidate School officers annually, it appears that the current facilities at Fort Benning would accommodate both the needs of the Guard and those of the active Army. (p. 7/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 7-8.

  DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. While the Federal Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning may be capable of producing up to 1,200 new officers per year for the Total Army, that level would not meet the needs of the Army National Guard. First, the requirement for new officers from Officer Candidate Schools for the Army National Guard alone is projected to exceed 1,200. Second, exclusive use of a centralized officer candidate school would be likely to discourage attendance by many highly qualified young men and women in the several states.

- **FINDING G**: **Army Survey and Air National Guard Experience Indicate Candidates Would Attend a Centralized Officer Candidate School**. The GAO concluded that available data indicates that centralizing Army National Guard commissioning training would not have a great impact on recruitment of officer candidates. The GAO noted that an April 1992 Army survey of state officer candidates, prepared by the Army Personnel Survey Office, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavior and Social Sciences administered in April 1992, indicated that over 60 percent of the candidates would have attended the 10- or 14-week Federal Officer Candidate School if required--while only 17 percent said they would not become officers if Fort Benning were the only option. The GAO added that 23 percent were undecided.

  The GAO also reported that, according to Air National Guard officials, they have had no difficulty in obtaining candidates for their 6-week centralized officer training program. The GAO concluded that, while the past experience of Air National Guard officials and the opinions of current officer candidates may not be directly applicable to

Now on p. 9.

future Army National Guard officer candidates, with the significant reduction in officer requirements, the Army National Guard will not have difficulty attracting officer candidates if the training is conducted at Fort Benning. (p. 8/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Nonconcur. Centralizing the Army National Guard commissioning training would significantly impact on officer candidate recruitment. National Guardsmen have great difficulty attending a single 14-week training course because of conflicts with employers and other educational programs. Evidence indicates that between 25 and 40 percent of qualified applicants would likely reject a consolidated program at Fort Benning. Army and Air National Guard officer precommissioning training programs are not comparable because of substantial differences in the nature of the training provided, the number of candidates trained, and the civilian education level and length of service of the enlisted personnel who apply for officer training. By comparison, the Air National Guard program is significantly shorter than that of the Army Guard, and the total requirement for Air Guard lieutenants is much smaller. It would be unwise to establish a consolidated program requirement for the Army Guard that would effectively preclude many promising young men and women from attending officer candidate school.

- **FINDING H: No Evidence on the Quality of Officers Produced by Different Officer Accession Programs**. The GAO reported a March 1992 Army report stated there is no convincing evidence that the Federal Officer Candidate School program produces an officer superior in quality to the other programs. The GAO concluded that report is not a sufficient basis for maintaining the current structure. The GAO pointed out that, according to Army officials responsible for the report, the quality of officers produced at either the state academies or Fort Benning was not measurable. The GAO explained the Army has a core curriculum that all commissioning programs, including the academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps, and the Officer Candidate Schools, must follow to ensure that all new officers meet the Army's minimum qualifications. The GAO found that, while each Army National Guard academy maintains a standard program of instruction and tests, neither the Army nor the states have assessed the academy graduates' performance as officers. The GAO noted that in an earlier review (OSD Case 9069), it had found a similar situation for all newly commissioned officers, and recommended that the Secretary of Defense have the Military Services develop a means to evaluate the effectiveness of the various commissioning programs on a routine basis and the quality of the graduates that they produce. The GAO reported that such a project is to be implemented for the active Services by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

  The GAO found that each Army National Guard academy operates independently, with policy and funding provided by the National Guard Bureau. The GAO noted that each undergoes annual accreditation reviews by the U.S. Army Forces Command, but

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the reviews are merely checklist assessments of candidate selection, instruction, facilities, and availability of applicable regulations. The GAO reported that the states it visited also used several internal quality assurance checks, but they were not standardized and relied primarily on the discretion of the separate academies. The GAO also found that the Army is planning to accredit each academy under a new program in 1995, but details were unavailable. (pp. 8-9/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. It should be recognized, however, that the 1992 Army Research Institute study cited by the GAO analyzed the career progression of a cohort of Army National Guard officers over the first ten years of commissioned service. The study concluded that the source of commission of an Army National Guard officer has no appreciable impact on his or her career in terms of selection for promotion, or for key assignments, including command and primary staff positions. All Army commissioning sources meet established quality standards.

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RECOMMENDATION

Now on p. 10.

- **RECOMMENDATION**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to transition toward using the officer candidate school at Fort Benning, Georgia, to train new Army National Guard officers--rather than using the individual state academies. The GAO suggested a staged transition (such as closing the smaller academies first) could be used to capture reliable personnel and travel cost data to provide a more conclusive assessment of cost-effectiveness. The GAO pointed out that since closing State Officer Candidate School academies would not involve closing down installations or facilities, there is little potential risk in moving quickly. (p. 9/GAO Draft Report)

  DOD RESPONSE: Nonconcur. While the DoD agrees that some consolidation of Reserve component training should be accomplished, the DoD does not agree that only a single officer candidate school should be established at Fort Benning to train new Army National Guard officers, with the resulting closure of State Officer Candidate Schools. The state programs are a major source of officers for units in small communities and affords qualified soldiers the opportunity to earn a commission who, for employment or other reasons, cannot attend the Federal Officer Candidate School. Current officer production systems are not meeting the Army National Guard annual requirement for new officers. Further, evidence indicates that up to 40 percent of State Officer Candidate School candidates might not have entered officer training if a single Federal School was the only commissioning option. The Army National Guard cannot afford the risk of exacerbating the shortage of company grade officers that would degrade unit readiness.

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In an effort to achieve some training consolidation and increase efficiency, the Army is implementing and testing Future Army Schools Twenty One. That initiative is intended to consolidate some Reserve component training redundancies that clearly do not provide a cost benefit. Initial results of the Army program are expected in Fiscal Year 1995. The Office of the Secretary of Defense, as well as the Army, will continue to review organizational structures and seek to identify areas for further consolidation.

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